

Chapter 5. Community Input

Public Input Topics

The following sections present a discussion of issues discussed and identified through the various public input strategies noted in the previous chapter. This information was collected through community surveys, stakeholder interviews, community meetings, and focus groups. Information is presented under four separate headings:

- I. Information about the Communities
- II. Community Concerns
- III. Potential Solutions
- IV. Outcomes of the Plan

I. Information about the Communities

Although Chapter 1 provides an overview of demographic information and issues identified in other reports and studies that assessed transportation needs and availability, one focus of the public outreach process was to better understand how people make use of the available transportation network and where and when they want to travel.

How Do People Travel?

In all three of the study communities, both community members and agency representatives report that they and their clients primarily drive, walk, and ride BART and AC Transit.

The community surveys provide more detail. Because surveys were completed by community residents (and not agency staff) — in many cases, residents who were unable to attend public meetings — they highlight the importance of public transit in the community and indicate a large group of people who walk to their destination. According to the survey responses for Ashland and Cherryland, the most common travel mode is driving. South Hayward is the exception in the survey, where many from the small group of survey respondents said they ride the bus, which is also the most second most common answer in Ashland. In Cherryland, the second most common answer is walk, which is significant because one of the key concerns is that the area has very few sidewalks. Figure 5-1 displays this data.

Figure 5-1 How Do You Travel? (From Community Surveys)

	Ashland	Cherryland	South Hayward
Drive	35%	51%	27%
Walk	19%	28%	20%
Ride the bus	24%	14%	47%
Catch a ride/carpool	6%	3%	7%
Bike	5%	3%	
Taxi	2%		
BART	8%	2%	
<i>Total Responses</i>	<i>62</i>	<i>181</i>	<i>30</i>

Seniors and people with disabilities were identified as having special transportation needs, often relying on special services such as paratransit or social service programs geared toward addressing their concerns. Meeting attendees stressed that there are a very high concentration of boarding and care facilities in the study area. In addition, many long-time residents have aged and are now still living within the area.

Where Do People Go?

Community groups described where people need to travel but have “difficulty accessing.” Their answers were consistent and universal: work, medical care, shopping and schools.

According to community members, all three of the study neighborhoods lack some basic necessities such as healthcare facilities and grocery stores. The many families in the area have a hard time getting to appointments and health care. Some mentioned that transportation to church is also an issue. Community members pointed out that some of the issues are problems because of the location of the services. For example, even though St. Rose Medical Center is in South Hayward, many South Hayward residents need to travel to Kaiser Permanente Hospital for medical care.

Appendix F provides a list of individual comments from the community meetings for travel needs. From the list of community representative comments, four types of activity centers were identified as difficult to access:

- **Medical Care** - Access to Kaiser Hospital is time-consuming and requires multiple bus transfers. This was identified as an issue for residents of all three communities.
- **Jobs** - Getting to worksites is difficult for many residents because people work far from their homes or at hours that are not conducive to transit use.
- **Schools and Daycare Centers** - Schools and daycare centers should be easier to access or relocated closer to employment centers or residential concentrations.
- **Shopping** - Although many community members said shopping is not hard to access, some of the more desirable stores are hard to reach. Of the three study communities, Ashland, home to Bayfair Mall, has the best shopping access.

Although not statistically valid, the survey responses help to clarify the most challenging places to access, according to the community:

- **Ashland** - In Ashland, people have more difficulty getting their children to school or day care and the hospital. Although some community representatives said supermarkets were difficult to get to, survey respondents said supermarkets are the easiest for people to access.
- **Cherryland** - In nearby Cherryland, the most difficult services to access are the hospital, jobs, and health clinics. Again, the supermarket — although it came up in community representative interviews and community meetings — was noted as relatively easy to access.
- **South Hayward** - Although only a small sample of surveys were collected in South Hayward, respondents said jobs and schools/day are the most difficult to access, which is very similar to what was described in community meetings and in interviews. Parks and recreation, hospitals, and health clinics were the easiest to access, because some medical facilities are located in South Hayward.

According to community representatives, there is a “disconnect” in some instances between community facilities and the needs of the South Hayward community. Some facilities in other parts of Hayward are where South Hayward residents go for services. For example, the County building on Amador contains the Unemployment Department, CalWORKS program, childcare and a health clinic. Yet, the County charges for parking for clients of these services making access to these service difficult especially for large families who must drive from transit-inaccessible neighborhoods.

Tables illustrating these survey results are included in **Appendix G**. The survey also asked respondents to list specific locations that they think should have better public transportation access. The details on these locations are also listed in this appendix.

What are the Transit Markets for Lifeline Services?

Community representatives talked about the target populations for the Community-Based Transportation Plan. The following are the markets that were identified for Ashland, Cherryland, and South Hayward:

- **Single Parents with Children** - Many community representatives talked about single mothers – and some mentioned fathers – with several young children. A couple of community representatives also noted the importance of providing services for undocumented immigrants in this category.
- **Individuals and Families with Low Incomes** - Community representatives described this group as encompassing both unemployed community members and the “working poor.” This lifeline service market includes homeless families with children, families with few resources (e.g., no car), immigrants and CalWORKS recipients.

- **Senior Citizens** - A few community representatives said the most critical market for lifeline transportation services is senior citizens, including disabled seniors. Some community representatives talked about the need to address seniors who are no longer able to drive, as well as grandparent caregivers.
- **Youth** - The youth market includes young children in elementary school, as well as high school students. Youth with special needs were also mentioned, including those residing in community group homes.
- **Persons with Disabilities** - Mobility barriers for persons with mental and physical disabilities result in limited access to transportation.

II. Community Concerns

Through surveys, community meetings and interviews with community and agency representatives, a series of key transportation concerns were identified. The key issues identified throughout the study area are as follows:

- **Bus travel is inconvenient** due to difficult transfers and limited frequencies, service span and coverage. Some routes operate every 30 minutes and residents would like to see 15-minute service. Some transit services are not available after 10:00 PM on weekdays, and end service even earlier on weekends.
- **Information about transportation services is often hard to find** or not available in accessible formats and languages. The availability of information should be improved and transportation resources should be provided in multiple languages.
- **The high cost of transit fares and owning and operating a car** make it expensive to travel locally and throughout the Bay Area for people on a fixed income. With increases in the cost of living, families cannot afford bus fares.
- **Pedestrian and traffic safety** improvements are needed, according to the community. These include traffic calming, a better infrastructure (especially for persons with disabilities who have a very hard time getting around), sidewalks and an overall safer walking and transit environment for getting to and from the bus.
- **Other Concerns** include bicycles and cars that play a part in the local transportation network. Bikes can be effective for people traveling short distances. Amenities such as bicycle lanes and bicycle parking can encourage bike riding. Creative strategies should look at low cost auto loans or other ways to make automobile use more affordable.

Specific community concerns are described in the following sections.

Specific comments from community representatives about each of these area-wide transportation issues are presented in **Appendix H**.

Public Transit Concerns

A series of concerns about public transit service were identified throughout the public outreach process.

AC Transit Issues

Transit is seen as an integral component of the transportation network in Central Alameda County. Key concerns include the cost of transit service, as well as a number of service shortcomings.

More than any other mode, community members identify transit as the way people without access to a car must travel. Comments by transit service are listed by type in **Appendix H**. Several themes emerged as the most frequently mentioned in surveys and community representative meetings. According to the community, AC Transit:

- Is **costly** to use. The price of transit is too high for the working poor.
- Has some **unfriendly drivers**.
- Provides **limited information** about its services. Residents in all three communities said public information on transit is inadequate. Clear signage in multiple languages at bus stops and elsewhere would be an important improvement.
- Has a **lack of transit amenities**. According to community members, bus stops need benches and shelters for inclement weather and seniors/people with disabilities.
- Operates during a **limited service span**. According to community members, transit services should be available 24 hours and on weekends for better service to the transit-dependent including swing-shift workers.
- Can be a challenge to **access** because of limited sidewalks and areas that feel unsafe.
- Has a **service design** that does not necessarily meet all community needs. At community meetings in all three of the study neighborhoods, residents said they need better service coverage which would result in shorter walking distances to bus stops.
- Has a very **limited frequency**. Residents would like to see buses operating every 15 minutes.
- Has **transfers** that are not coordinated (including the bus-BART connections).

As part of the Central Alameda County Transit Study (2002), AC Transit conducted extensive community meetings and developed a comprehensive transit plan for the study area. Some of the goals that served as a point of focus for the AC Transit study included the very same concerns being voiced by community representatives. The transit agency sought to provide service from 6:00 AM to 10:00 PM throughout the study area, with all bus routes operating every 30 minutes. Due to budget constraints affecting all transit services, service was reduced to only once per hour for some services and with very limited service after 7:00 PM.

Although some of these issues are common to Ashland, Cherryland and South Hayward, some specific concerns are noted in the individual communities:

- **Ashland** - According to Ashland residents, some of the biggest issues are limited service on the weekends and problems associated with transferring and making connections between buses (and BART and buses). In addition, Ashland residents described personal safety concerns — fear of being attacked or robbed — while using transit and the need for more frequent AC Transit service in their community.
- **Cherryland** - For Cherryland, one of the critical concerns is a “lack of sidewalks.” Although it is a pedestrian issue, it is also a transit issue because limited sidewalks are a barrier to accessing AC Transit, whose buses cannot safely stop along some of the streets in the area due to ADA requirements. Survey outreach efforts in Cherryland also found that critical transit-related concerns include problems with transferring/connections between buses and that bus service is “not available near where people live,” an issue also related to the sidewalk concern. Other critical issues identified by community members include the need for more frequent service, the need for longer hours and more days of service, better on-time performance, and more polite customer service by AC Transit drivers.
- **South Hayward** - Community representatives in South Hayward said that there are not enough AC Transit routes and those that exist are too infrequent on both weekends and weekdays. Several community representatives noted that transit services do not spatially serve all of South Hayward’s concentrations of young people and lowest income residents for job, school, and shopping-related trips (see Chapter 2 for locations). These concerns were echoed by community members at meetings and by individuals who completed a survey form. Other critical AC transit issues identified in South Hayward include the limited service hours operated by AC Transit on some routes, that buses do not operate on-time, and that bus shelters are not located throughout the area.

The survey findings, based on respondents who were AC Transit users, are illustrated in Appendix L.

Other Transit Service Issues

While BART passes through each of the study communities, BART stations are located only in Ashland and South Hayward. Three complaints were among the most common about BART service:

- **BART stations are inconvenient.** The South Hayward BART station is not a hub of local activity, and even the Bayfair Station is difficult to access. By bus, car or as a pedestrian.
- **BART service hours are not long enough.** Individuals in all three of the communities said that their ability to apply for some jobs is limited because they cannot get to or from work without BART operating all night.

- **BART is expensive.** Individuals with limited incomes have to spend a lot of money to use BART.

Few comments were provided about East Bay Paratransit, although Hayward's Paratransit Service was discussed by some South Hayward residents and agency representatives working with community members. Although Hayward was minimally affected by AC Transit's service reductions, the impact of cuts will affect the East Bay Paratransit service area, meaning that riders will then turn to the non-mandated Measure B paratransit program operated by the City of Hayward, which provides service in the areas that are unserved by East Bay Paratransit. Because the City of Hayward limits use to 10 trips per month, the service cannot be used to travel to and from full-time work. In addition, the City of Hayward's local paratransit services are facing financial constraints, and community members express concern about how budget shortfalls might affect transit service in the short-term.

Pedestrian Concerns

Community members shared concerns about pedestrian facilities in Ashland, Cherryland and South Hayward. According to the communities, the three key pedestrian issues are as follows:

- **Traffic Speed Near Pedestrians** - Cars drive too fast and pedestrians lack crosswalks in some areas.
- **Unsafe Pavement For Walking** - Cars park on temporary gravel sidewalks; many streets in unincorporated areas do not have sidewalks at all.
- **Personal Safety While Walking, Riding a Bike, or Waiting at a Bus Stop** - People are concerned about walking in the dark —especially where there are no sidewalks— and about gangs and vandalism.

Appendix F displays some of the individual comments made about pedestrian issues at community meetings

Specific pedestrian issues raised in each of the study communities are as follows:

- **Ashland** - Traffic safety was identified as an important issue throughout Ashland. The 2002 Eden Area Plan identified cut-through traffic as a major issue along with pedestrian safety and the lack of sidewalks in some areas. High traffic speeds, poor visibility at bus stops (e.g., improving the safety of bus stops on E. 14/Mission) and concern about personal safety are issues that were raised by the community. Unsafe pavement on some of the sidewalks and the lack of bus shelters were also identified as limitations to pedestrian access in Ashland.
- **Cherryland** - In Cherryland, lack of sidewalks is a problem. Regarding one specific location, Cherryland Elementary School representatives mentioned that of their roughly 1,000 students, half (500 students) walk to school, many along Western Boulevard, which does not have any sidewalks. Thus, students are forced to walk

with the automobile traffic. Sidewalks represent a critical component of the transportation system as they also limit the ability of transit to serve the area. Buses will not stop without a sidewalk. According to community members, the lack of sidewalks in the Cherryland area is a significant barrier for people to move about the community and affects the mobility of all segments of the population— seniors, persons with disabilities, families, etc.

Specific pedestrian barriers along particular streets were also identified, such as the lack of benches or shelters at bus stops along Whitman St., unsafe street gutters along Haviland, people walking down the center of Liberty Street due to no sidewalks and overgrown trees, and other physical barriers. Particular streets have been targeted for redevelopment, including Grove, Haviland, Western, Meekland, and Blossom, which should address some of the most critical transportation concerns in the community.

- **South Hayward** - In South Hayward, problems include inadequate sidewalk widths and unsafe crossing facilities at arterials that permeate the residential neighborhoods. The City of Hayward has a good reputation for addressing basic public works needs, so sidewalks and access to transit facilities is not identified as a major problem (although some sidewalks were described as “narrow” or “inadequate”). One issue in South Hayward is the opportunity for densification and increasing the level of activity in and around the South Hayward BART Station (even though it is a transportation hub, land uses in the vicinity of the station do not support shopping and services that residents desire).

Specific comments about transit service limitations provided by community representatives are included in **Appendix H**.

Bicycle Concerns

The community agreed that bicycle travel is not a common mode in the study area. However, many children and some adults travel by bicycle. According to some social service agency representatives, the study area has a high concentration of recent immigrants who would be predisposed to using a bicycle for transportation, because it is common in the country from which they immigrated. The lack of secure bicycle parking facilities and bicycle lanes were identified as potential barriers to greater bicycle use.

- **Ashland and Cherryland.** Community meeting attendees noted that the lack of sidewalks and bike lanes in the Ashland/Cherryland neighborhood and the lack of enforcement of bicycle lanes (people parking in them or otherwise blocking them) cause hazardous conditions for bicycle travelers.
- **South Hayward.** South Hayward community groups mentioned that there is a need for bicycle lanes on Tyrrell and Tennyson and near all parks.

III. Potential Solutions

The previous section identified a number of the key transportation needs. In Appendix L, some of the potential solutions offered by community members and representatives are listed to address these and other needs. The figure also shows the communities for which these solutions were recommended. Key types of solutions are as follows:

- **Transit Solutions.** According to community members, inadequate transit service leaves a person without a car “stranded,” unable to access employment, medical care, grocery stores, banks, schools, churches and parks that are not located in their immediate neighborhood. Community meetings brought a variety of potential solutions to light in the areas of service quality, information, fare/fare media, bus stops, and other solutions.
- **Pedestrian Access Solutions.** The community does not always associate pedestrian problems with the transportation system as a whole. However, in order to get anywhere safely, adequate pedestrian facilities must be in place. A variety of solutions to address issues in the community were identified by community members, including improved sidewalks, crosswalks, traffic calming and others.
- **Automobile Solutions.** Sometimes the most efficient way to travel is the automobile. Community members identified a variety of auto-based solutions including financial assistance for auto-owners, a volunteer driver program, and taxi vouchers.

A detailed list of potential solutions, including comments from community representatives, is included in **Appendix I**.

These many solutions are evaluated as part of Chapter 6, which presents evaluation criteria identified by the community.

IV. Outcomes of the Plan

Support from community representatives will be critical to making the plan's recommendations a reality. Community representatives were asked what elements of the plan would be necessary for them to support it and take ownership of the recommendations.

One critical issue is that the plan should identify a stable funding source for the recommended solutions. According to community representatives, programs in the Plan should not be set up as pilots. The plan should address sustainability of the projects and should include funding for operations — not just capital projects. In addition, the plan should evidence support of community representatives and the involvement of the community in order to attain community and political support.

Another is that the plan should focus on policy issues and take a holistic look at not only programmatic needs, but also land use, the quality of the built environment and redevelopment of underutilized areas. Some community representatives said the plan should focus on the solutions for providing a better infrastructure — sidewalks, roads, and community facilities — for the area.

Several community representatives emphasized the importance of finding innovative solutions and new transit operators for the study area. A few community representatives talked about specific population groups and markets that should be addressed as part of a community-based plan, including the low-income community, the non-English-speaking population, seniors, parents, disabled people, and pedestrians.

Community representatives were asked if they perceived any possible institutional barriers to implementing the recommended strategies. Although many community representatives said they were not aware of any institutional barriers or that they presumed various agencies would be able to work together to implement the strategies, a few issues were raised:

- In the Cherryland-Ashland area, some community representatives suggested they would like to see more resources focused on Cherryland, which would depart from previous efforts focused on Ashland where Bayfair BART is located there.
- The various political boundaries in the study area could pose some challenges for coordination. The political boundaries of the City of Hayward and County Supervisors cross the study area.
- Some community representatives asked who would pay for sidewalk or amenity improvements? Will it be the City or the County? This illustrates a need for coordination.
- According to community representatives, it can be challenging to work within the guidelines and regulations of some of the agencies responsible for transportation in the study area.

According to *one community representative*, each agency has a different mission and set of priorities, and this presents a challenge when trying to come up with coordinated solutions.

There is resistance to issues that arise that are outside the focus of the agency. However, according to community representatives, one of the advantages of this study is that it will provide an opportunity for the various agencies to work more closely with one another.